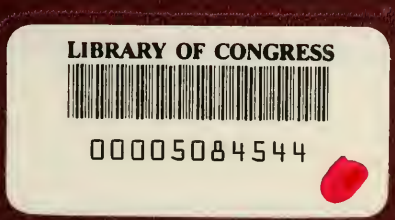
E 333
.S62



IV.—THE WORLD ASPECTS OF THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE.

By WILLIAM M. SLOANE,
Professor, Columbia University, New York.

FEB 16 1905
D. of D.

THE WORLD ASPECTS OF THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE.

By William M. Sloane.

Argument by title is a very attractive form of fallacy. We therefore freely confess that it is rather a thesis we have to establish than a theme to unfold when we speak of the Louisiana purchase as a decisive epoch of general history and of American history in particular. Moreover, there is a sense in which every moment throughout the comparatively short duration of recorded history is a decisive one; in the pursuit of that idea the verge between sound, solemn truth, and fanciful fiction is but a razor edge.

Yet by common consent some men and some events are epochal. Carefully scrutinized, such men and such events are known by very definite qualities. There are times when the great central current has few lagoons, no backwater, and never an eddy. The whole substance of history is thrown into a single channel, affording a notable example of the unity of history and compelling its study by transverse sections rather than by longitudinal fibers. The man of such a period is fairly certain to be preeminently busy, so diligent, so comprehensive, so perspicacious as to be for the duration of his activity and ability an indispensable person, the man of his age. He is literally and etymologically a governor, for he steers the bark of state alike on the convexity of the swift and swollen tide, and in the hollowing current of a falling flood.

Such a decisive epoch was that of the eighteenth-century revolutions, a crisis reached after long, slow preparation, precipitated by social and religious bigotry, dizzy in its consummation, wild and headlong in its flight, precipitous in its crash. Of this important time the results have been so permanent that they are the commonplaces of contemporary history; in

what Carlyle called the revolutionary loom the warp and woof were spun from the past, and the fabric is that from which our working clothes are cut. Moreover, within those years appeared the great dominating soul of modern humanity, who displayed first and last every weakness and every sordid meanness of mankind, but in such giant dimensions that even his depravity inspires awe. His virtues were equally portentious because they worked on the grand scale, with materials that had been thrashed and winnowed in the theory and experience of five generations of mankind. It was well within this stupendous age and by the act of this representative man that Louisiana was redeemed from Spanish misrule and incorporated with the Territories of the United States. Nor was this all. A careful examination of the general political situation just a hundred years ago will exhibit the elemental and almost ultimate fact that the sale of Louisiana was coincident with the turn of the age. It is to this exhibit and to some reflections on its meaning that we address ourselves.

The substance of the treaty of Amiens was that Great Britain ostensibly abandoned all concern with the continent of Europe, and that France, ostensibly too, should strictly mind her own affairs in her colonies and the remoter quarters of the globe. George III removed from his escutcheon the fleur-de-lis, and from his ceremonial title the style of King of France. The whole negotiation was on both sides purely diplomatic, an exchange of public and hollow courtesies, to gain time for the realities of a struggle for supremacy between the world powers of the period, a struggle begun with modern history, renewed in 1688, and destined to last until the exhaustion of one of the contestants in 1815. Neither party to the treaty had the slightest intention of observing either its spirit or its letter. While the paper was in process of negotiation Bonaparte was consolidating French Empire on the Continent, and after its signature he did not pause for a single instant to show even a formal respect for his obligations. The reorganization of Holland in preparation for its incorporation into the French system, the annexation of Piedmont, and defiance to Russia in the matter of her Italian protégés, the act of moderation in Switzerland, and, finally, the contemptuous rearrangement of Germany, were successive steps which reduced England to despair for her continental

trade. To her it seemed as if there could be no question about two things: First, that the old order must be restored, in order to safeguard her commercial safety; and second, that her colonial policy must be more aggressive than ever.

A favorite charge of Napoleon's detractors is that he left France without a colonial empire. This was due to no absence of either aspirations or efforts. His earliest passion, his mature intention, his latest yearnings were for a French colonial empire. This was true, because there was not one item of the great political creed formulated by Richelieu to which he did not consider himself the heir; oriental aspirations, western ventures and explorations, the dominance of France in the tropic seas, around the globe, were articles of that creed. It had been therefore no slight blow to his personal ambition when he failed in Egypt. Turkey was still safe under the protection of Great Britain, and the highway to India was still in British hands. Almost without a moment's hesitancy, he turned his forces westward and formed the majestic design of a second New France around the Caribbean, the Gulf of Mexico, and eventually with a mighty wing toward South America. This adjunct became the chief corner stone of the policy when, after its initial failure, he had a chance to renew it in 1808 by Sassenay's mission to Argentina.

Simultaneously he had come to terms with Paul of Russia, and with him he negotiated a grandiose treaty providing for a great land expedition against Hindustan. Each power was to furnish 35,000 men and a corps of scholars; the march was to be a colonization of the wilderness, and the wealth of the East Indies was to be the reward. Paul died by violence just as his army was crossing the Volga on the ice in March, 1801, and Alexander, his more or less blood-guilty but philosophic heir, put a stop to further procedure. A curious chapter of England's resistance to the French Revolution is that for which Lord Wellesley furnished the subject-matter in his campaign against Tippoo Sahib, then in alliance with a mighty band of French adventurers, who, though royalists, were willing to stand and fight for French supremacy in India. To this long and gallant struggle the treaty of Amiens was an extinguisher, for it restored the five French cities to Bonaparte. Decaen, the noted and boasting Anglophobe, had demanded a mission to India on the very morrow of Hohenlinden; less

than a month after the signatures were affixed at Amiens he was dispatched to occupy the French towns of Pondicherry, now to be restored. But with an expedition of 1,600 men he had the monstrous disproportion of seven generals and a corresponding mass of minor officers. Clearly he was to reorganize the whole French force of India. Wellesley refused to execute the treaty, and Decaen was forced back on the French settlements of Réunion as a base from which to await developments. Hindu troops were drilled, reorganized, and found thoroughly trustworthy; a detachment of them had even been sent to Egypt, where they had some slight share in the retention of British control. It was Bonaparte's rôle to present a dauntless front to his foes, whatever his inner discouragement and hesitancy. Accordingly he dispatched the notorious Sebastiani as a so-called commercial agent to examine the situation in the Levant. The result was a report giving an exact account of all the English and Turkish forces beyond the Adriatic, and drawing the highly pertinent conclusion that 6,000 French soldiers could reconquer Egypt. When this stinging insult was published by the First Consul in the Moniteur, the British world was worried into open defiance.

From this rapid survey there emerge the important facts essential to our discussion. It was surely a turning point in the history of the civilized world, so far as Asia was concerned, when Bonaparte's oriental designs were permanently thwarted; when Russia was forced into an eastward expansion north of the great central mountain ridge of Asia to become a hyperborean power; when England defiantly claimed for the first time all Hindustan as her own. It wrote "finis" to the chapter of France's glory in India, and, indeed, to the story of her Asiatic aspirations; her far-eastern colonies seized under the present Republic are comparatively insignificant factories, which she holds on the sufferance of the European concert, and for which she would not defy the world a single moment, as she would defy it to the spilling of her heart's blood should her present African empire be menaced.

Again, the situation was a turning point of the first importance in Africa. In consequence of the desire of both contracting parties to catch their breath, Egypt was restored to Turkey, and the Cape Colony was to be a free port—a no-man's-land; Malta, which is an African isle, was to be returned

to the Knight's of St. John. The theory was that not one Christian power, continental or insular, was to hold a coign of vantage as regards the dark continent. Russia, to be sure, was zealous for Malta; England and France, for Egypt and the Cape; they might remain so, but that was all. Of course we are familiar with the late partitions of Africa among the powers, the coast and hinterland arrangements which bid fair to become permanent occupations. Had it not been for the compulsory suspension of Bonaparte's oriental plans, the retention by England both of India and of the Indian highway through the Mediterranean, and the confirmation of this situation by the evolution of affairs across the Atlantic, which culminated in the sale of Louisiana to us, the fate of Africa, humanly speaking, would, like that of Asia, have been far different in every single respect.

What was written for Europe in the book of fate was soon revealed. No one could prate more serenely about destiny than General Bonaparte, nor scrutinize more quizzically the sibylline leaves. But like the augurs of old, he could scarcely retain his mirth when he announced the oracle, nor keep his body from shaking with laughter while the feigned fury of passion was distorting the features of his face in frenzied anger. The treaty of Amiens was negotiated subject to guaranties from the other powers, and Addington well knew that Russia was going to fish in the troubled waters of neutrality for the leviathan of her disappearing prosperity. So the English refused to evacuate Malta. The Whitworth scene is one of Napoleon Bonaparte's finest dramatic rôles, and the delivery of his line, "I would rather see England in the Faubourg St. Antoine than in Malta," a climax of theatrical statesmanship. It is by no means sure that he might not have seen the British sail away both from Alexandria and Valetta; that he might not have received in delivery the cities of Pondicherry; that he might not have confirmed his American empire, had he been willing to grant Great Britain a commercial treaty that would have turned her stores of manufactured goods into hard cash, have relieved the awful financial strain under which she was tortured, and have given her the full advantage of her long precedence in the industrial revolution. But no. By the treaty of Morfontaine, September 30, 1800, with the United States, he arranged to strip us of all

Mississippi trade and thus tardily execute the policy of our isolation on this continent, which Vergennes had vainly sought to embody in the public law of Europe. Soon he began to close the ports of France and her allies more firmly than ever to British goods, hoping under the protective system to give France a chance in the race for industrial supremacy. The English were aghast, and in their grim determination to renew what they felt was a struggle for life and death they broke off diplomatic relations, and war began. This outcome was inevitable, but it was too soon for Bonaparte. His versatility was sorely strained to settle finally on his policy.

It was Samuel Adams who first sneered at his fatherland as a people of shopkeepers. The winged word soon became a commonplace to all outsiders, but as it flew every nation that used the gibe girded itself to enter the struggle for the same goal. France above all was determined to be a nation of shopkeepers, and the First Consul of what was still a shaky experiment in government knew well that rather than abandon that ambition he must sacrifice every other. After all, a colonial empire has value only as the home nation has accessible ports, manufactories for colonial products, and wares to exchange with the producers. France had neither factories nor manufactures, and was destitute of nearly the whole machinery of exchange. Her merchant vessels sailed only by grace of the British fleet. Her home market was dependent on British traders, even in times of war. Bonaparte's foremost thought, therefore, was for concentration of energy. The sea power of the world was Britain's, and her tyranny of the seas without a real check; even the United States could only spit out defiant and revengeful threats when her merchantmen were treated with contempt on the high seas by British men-of-war. Therefore with swift and comprehensive grasp he framed and announced a new policy. The French envoy in London was informed that France was now forced to the conquest of Europe—this of course for the stimulating of French industries—and to the restoration of her occidental empire. This was most adroit. The embers of French patriotism could be fanned into a white heat by these well worn but never exhausted expedients—a blast against perfidious Albion and a sentimental passion for the New France beyond the Atlantic. The motions were a feint against England by

the formation of a second camp at Boulogne, where a force really destined for Austria was assembled, and the wresting of Louisiana from the weak Spanish hands which held it. As an incident of the agitation it seemed best that the French democracy should have an imperial rather than a republican title, and the style of emperor and empire was exhumed from the garbage heap of the Terror for use in the pageantry of a court.

In Europe thus, as in the neighboring continents, the rearrangement of politics, territorial boundaries, social, economic, and diplomatic relations, a change which has made possible the modern system, was really dependent on the events which led to the adoption of the policy just described. But this policy involved a reversal of every sound historical principle in Bonaparte's plans. For twelve years longer he was to commit blunder upon blunder; to trample on national pride; to elevate a false system of political economy into a fetish; to conduct, as in the Moscow campaign, great migrations to the eastward in defiance of nature's laws; to launch his plain, not to say vulgar and weak, family on an enterprise of monarchical alliances for which they had no capacity; to undo, in short, as far as in him lay, every beneficent and well conceived piece of statesmanship with which he had so far been concerned. It has been well said that had he died in midsummer, 1802, his glory would have been immaculate and there would have been no spots on his sun. The Napoleonic work in Europe was destined to have its far-reaching and permanent results, but the man was ere long almost entirely eliminated from control over them. The very last of his great constructions was the sale of Louisiana. He needed the purchase money, he selected his purchaser and forced it on him, with a view to upbuilding a giant rival to the gigantic power of Great Britain.

When we turn, therefore, to America we shall at once observe on how slender a thread a great event may depend; how great a fire may be kindled by a spark adroitly placed. While yet other matters were hanging in the balance he selected his own brother-in-law, General Leclerc, such was his deep concern, to conduct an expedition to the West Indies. There were embarked 35,000 men, and these the very flower of the republican armies, superb fighters, but a possible thorn

in the side of a budding emperor at home. Their goal was San Domingo, where a wonderful negro, Toussaint L'Ouverture, noting the attractive example of the benevolent despots in Europe, had, under republican forms, not only abolished slavery, but had made himself a beneficent dictator. The fine but delicate structure of his negro state was easily crushed to the earth, but the fighting was fierce and prolonged, the climate and the pest were enabled to inaugurate and complete a work of slaughter more baleful than that of war, and two-thirds of the French invaders, including the commander and 15 of his generals, fell victims to the yellow fever. The French were utterly routed, the sorry remnants sailed away, and the blacks fell into the hands of the worthless tyrant Dessalines, whose misrule killed the germs of order planted by Toussaint. One of our historians thinks this check of France by black soldiers to have been a determinative factor in American history, for thereafter there could be no question of a Gulf and Caribbean empire for France. Louisiana, he indicates, became at once a superfluous dependency, costly and annoying. This is a far-fetched contention: Great as have been the services of the negro to the United States since he first fought on the battlefield of Monmouth under Washington, the failure of France in San Domingo was not through the sword of the blacks, but was an act of God through pestilence.

The circumstances that forced Louisiana upon the United States, then a petty power with revenues and expenditures far smaller than those of the Philippine Islands at this moment, arose from Napoleon's European necessities. The cession from Spain included all that Spain had received from France, the whole Gulf coast from St. Marys to the Rio Grande, and the French pretensions not only northwestward to the Rockies but to the Pacific. The return made to Spain was the insignificant kingdom of Etruria and a solemn pledge that, should the First Consul fail in his promise, Louisiana in its fullest extent was to be restored to Spain. France therefore might not otherwise alienate it to any power whatever. The exacting and suspicious spirit shown both by Charles IV and his contemptible minister Godoy, Prince of the Peace, had exasperated Bonaparte beyond endurance. The Spanish Bourbons were doomed by him to the fate of their kinsfolk in France;

a pledge to a vanishing phantom of royalty was of small account. It was during the delay created by the punctilio of Godoy that the failure of the San Domingo expedition extinguished all hope of making Louisiana the sole entrepôt and staple of supplies for the West Indies. And simultaneously it grew evident that the truce negotiated at Amiens as a treaty could not last much longer; that either France must endure the humiliation of seeing her profits therefrom utterly withheld, or herself declare war, or goad Great Britain into a renewal of hostilities. This last, as is well known, was the alternative chosen by Napoleon.

Our Government had been in despair. The establishment of French empire in the West Indies would have destroyed our lucrative trade with the islands. It was trying enough that a feeble power like Spain should command the outlet of the Mississippi basin, but intolerable that such mastery of the continent should fall into the hands of a strong and magisterial power like France. We were in dismay, even after the departure of the French from San Domingo. Bonaparte, however, was scarcely less disturbed, for Jefferson, despite his avowed Gallicism, spiritedly declared both to the First Consul and to Livingston, our minister to Paris, that the occupation of Louisiana by the great French force organized to that end could only result in an alliance of the two English-speaking nations which would utterly banish the French flag from the high seas. Bonaparte preserved an outward calm for those about him and went his way apparently unperturbed. But inwardly his mind seethed and without long delay he took his choice between the courses open to him. It was the first exhibition to himself and his family of the imperial despot soon to be known as Napoleon I, Emperor of the French. If Britain was the tyrant of the seas, he would be despot of the land. To French empire he would reduce Germany, Italy, and Spain in subjection, and with all the maritime resources of the continent at his back he would first shut every important port to English commerce, and then with allied and dependent fleets at his disposal, try conclusions with the British behemoth for liberty of the seas and a new colonial empire. By the second camp at Boulogne and the occupation of Hanover Napoleon threw England into panic, while simultaneously he began the creation of his grand imperial army and thereby

menaced Austria, the greatest German power, in her coalition with Russia, Sweden, Naples, and Great Britain. The latter, he was well aware, could face a hostile demonstration on her front with courage if not with equanimity, and he determined to add a double stroke—to gain a harvest of gold and on her rear to strengthen her exasperated trans-Atlantic sea rival by selling Louisiana to the United States.

That determination was the turning point in his career, just as the sudden wheel and about face of the splendid force at Boulogne, when he hurled it across Europe at Vienna, displayed at last the turning point in his policy. His brother Lucien had been an influential negotiator with Spain and plumed himself on the acquisition of the great domain which had been for long the brightest jewel in the crown of France. His brother Joseph had negotiated the treaty of Amiens as a step preparatory to regaining a magnificent colonial empire for his country, an empire of which an old and splendid French possession was to be the corner stone. Both were stunned and then exasperated when they learned their brother's resolution, sensations which were intensified to fury when they heard him announce that he would work his will in spite of all constitutional checks and balances. There is no historic scene more grotesque than that depicted by Lucien in his memoirs when he and Joseph undertook to oppose Napoleon. The latter was luxuriating in his morning bath, on April 7, 1803, in the Tuileries, when the brothers were admitted. After a long and intimate talk on general politics the fateful subject was finally broached by Napoleon, as he turned from side to side and wallowed in the perfumed water. Neither of the brothers could control his feelings, and the controversy grew hot and furious from minute to minute until Joseph, leaning over the tub, roared threats of opposition and words of denunciation. Brother Napoleon, lifting himself half way to the top, suddenly fell back and clinched his arguments by splashing a full flood in the face and over the body of Joseph, drenching him to the skin. A valet was summoned. He entered, and paralyzed by the fury of the scene, fell in a dead faint. New aid was called, and the fires of passion being slaked for the time, the conflict ended until Napoleon and Joseph were decently clothed, when it was renewed in the office of the secretary Bourrienne. Ere long hot words were again spoken, violent language was succeeded by violent gestures, until at

last Napoleon in a theatrical rage dashed his snuffbox on the floor and the contestants separated. Disjointed and fierce as was the stormy argument, it revealed the whole of the imperial policy as we have stated it.

Meanwhile events in America, if not so picturesque and majestic, were equally tempestuous. The peace policy of Jefferson was rapidly going to pieces in the face of a westward menace, the Federalists were jubilant, and in the Senate James Ross, of Pennsylvania, called for war. When the intendant of Spain at New Orleans denied Americans the storage rights they had enjoyed in that city since 1795, the French politics of the President fell into general disrepute and contempt, for men reasoned a fortiori, if such things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? It mattered not that Spain's highest official, the governor, disavowed the act, the fire was in the stubble. The intendant was stubborn and the fighting temper waxed hot. Both the governor and the Spanish envoy at Washington disavowed the act again and rebuked the subordinate. Congress was soothed, but not so the people of the West and South. They were fully aware, as have been all our frontiersmen and pioneers from the beginning, that the Mississippi and all the lands it waters are the organic structure of unity and successful settlement on this continent. The Pacific and Atlantic coast strips, even the great but bleak valley of the St. Lawrence, are incidents of territorial unity and political control compared with the great alluvion of the Mississippi. This was unknown, utterly unknown, and, worse yet, entirely indifferent to our statesmen. Madison certainly, and possibly Jefferson, believed that western immigration would pause and end on the east bank of the Father of Waters.

Yet party government was a necessity under our system, and Jefferson's ladder, the Republican party, would be knocked into its component parts should the West and South, noisy, exacting, and turbulent, desert and go over to the expiring faction of the Federalists; nay, worse, it might be forced into almost complete negation of its own existence by a forced adoption of the Federalist policy, alliance with Great Britain—monarchic and aristocratic—rather than with radical and democratic France. What could a distracted partisan do? Jefferson was adroit and inventive. He sent James Monroe to

negotiate with Bonaparte for the purchase of New Orleans and both Floridas at the price of two millions, or upward to ten, for all or part, whatever he could get; he was not even to disdain the deposit or storage right, if nothing else could be had, and if he could get nothing, he was to await instructions. With such credentials he sailed on March 8, 1803. A peace lover must sometimes speak low and small, even as cowards sometimes do. Three weeks later appeared in New Orleans Laussat, the advance agent of French occupation; Victor and his troops were to follow. It is not possible to conceive that a foreign policy should be more perplexing, confused, or uncertain than that of the philosophic theorist who is the hero of the strict constructionist party in these United States.

Robert R. Livingston, the regular American envoy at Paris, had, under his instructions from home, worked with skill and zeal on the spoliation claims and incidentally on the question of the Mississippi and the Floridas. While the colonization schemes of Bonaparte seemed feasible, Livingston made no headway whatever, except to extort an admission that the spoliation claims were just. Neither Talleyrand nor Livingston was much concerned about the great Northwest. The American was clear that the importance of any control lay in the possession of New Orleans, and on April 11, 1803, he said so to the French minister, vigorously and squarely declaring further that a persistent refusal of our request would unite us with Great Britain to the serious discomfiture of France in her colonial aspirations. This was said with some asperity, for Livingston had been aware that the First Consul wanted all negotiation transferred to Washington under the guidance of a special envoy sent for the purpose, the willful Bernadotte, and now worse yet, he himself was to be superseded by Monroe. He had been a diligent and even importunate negotiator; it was a ray of comfort in later days to recall that the first suggestion for the sale of all Louisiana was made to him in that momentous interview.

What had occurred Livingston could not know. It was this: On the morning of that very day there reached the Tuileries dispatches giving in full detail an account of the tremendous preparations making in England for the renewal of war both by land and sea. Bonaparte's impatience knew

no bounds. Hitherto he had concealed his true policy of sale behind a scheme to spend the purchase money on internal improvements in France, and he had on his work table map outlines for five great canals. Now, at daybreak he summoned Barbé-Marbois, sometime French consul-general in the United States, an official of state with a thorough knowledge of our affairs, and ordered that a negotiation for the sale, not of the Floridas and New Orleans, but of all Louisiana, should immediately be opened with Livingston. He fixed the price at 50,000,000 francs. The envoy could of course do nothing, but he thought 30,000,000 enough. Next day Monroe arrived at Havre, and reaching Paris April 13, that very same day Barbé-Marbois and our two great statesmen began to treat. Upon Monroe and Livingston devolved a momentous responsibility. Monroe was by a most indefinite implication left a certain liberty, for under no circumstances whatsoever was he to end a negotiation if once it was begun. And here, instead of minimizing terms, was, so to speak, a great universe of land tender. But we had not so easily thrown off the bright and glistening garment of righteousness as had Napoleon Bonaparte, and in the minds of both Americans was the question, nonexistent for the First Consul, as he himself squarely said, of whether the inhabitants of the district, men and women, human souls, could be dealt in as chattels are.

Livingston had already seen darkly as in a glass what the west might make of the United States. Bonaparte's contributions to the discussion were terse and trenchant. If he did not transfer the title right speedily, a British fleet would take possession almost in a twinkling. The transfer, he said, might in three centuries make America the rival of Europe; why not?—it was a long way ahead—but, on the other hand, there never had been an enduring confederation, and this one in America was unlikely to begin the series; finally, he wanted the cash as the United States wanted the land. Let there be no delay. And there was none. The terms of the sale and the facts of the transfer do not concern us here. In Bonaparte we had no friend; but what the ancient régime began in establishing an American independence the First Consul completed; for, thanks to him, we fought the war of 1812 for commercial liberty, while the exploitation of Louisiana has

made us what we are to-day. The instant we accepted that great territory, with all its responsibilities and possibilities, we became a world power. We were puny enough as a world power at first, but we have grown. Jefferson and his agents were primarily statesmen for the purpose of existing conditions, and in Monroe's mission desired a remedy solely and entirely for party evils. They had, however, the courage to accept the fortune forced upon them, even though in their case, as in that of Bonaparte, it entailed, we repeat, a complete reversal of all the political and party principles of the platform on which they had hitherto stood.

The change wrought by the Louisiana purchase in American life and culture was simply revolutionary. Hitherto in our weakness we had faced backward, varying between two ideas of European alliance. We virtually had British and French parties. Jefferson, who represented the latter, thought of no other alternative in his trouble than to strike hands with England. With Louisiana on our hands we turned our faces to our own front door. The Louisiana we bought had no Pacific outlet in reality, but the Lewis and Clark expedition gave it one, and that we have broadened by war and purchase until we control the western shore of the continent. Under such engrossing cares we ceased to think of either French or British ties, except as exasperating, and became not merely Americans, but, realizing Washington's aspirations, turned into real continentals, with a scorn of all entanglements whatever. In the occupation and settlement of Louisiana the slavery question became acute, and it was the struggle for the expansion of that system over Louisiana soil which precipitated the civil war.

But if the change in national outlook was radical, that in constitutional attitude was even more so. The constitutions of our original States were the expression of political habits in a community, the Federal Constitution was in the main a transcript of those elements which were common in some degree to all the British colonies. It was an age of written constitutions, because the flux of institutions was so rapid that men needed a mooring for the substantial gains they had made. The past was so recent that statesmen were timid, and they wanted their metes and bounds to be fixed by a monument. Nothing was more natural than to pause and fall back on the record thus made permanent, and strict construc-

tion was and long continued to be a political fetish. The Louisiana purchase was a circumstance of the first importance in party struggle. Yet neither Federalist nor Republican dared, after mature deliberation, to urge the question of constitutional amendment as essential to meet the crisis thus precipitated. The enormous price entailed what was felt to be an intolerable burden of taxation, and in the uproar of spoken and printed debate played no small part. But the vital question was whether the adjustment of new relations was constitutional.

Never did the kaleidoscope of politics display a more surprising reversal of effect. The loose-construction party lost its wits entirely, while the strict constructionists suddenly became the apostles not of verbal but of logical construction. Jefferson violated his principles in signing the treaty, but he was easily persuaded that amendment was not necessary; that on the contrary the treaty-making power covered the case completely. This was not conquest, which would have been covered by the war power, but purchase, which is covered by the treaty power, surrendered, like the other, by the States to the Federal Government. The Federalists were represented in the House by Gaylord Griswold; in the Senate by Ross and Pickering. Their resistance was identical in both, factious to the highest degree. They contended that the Executive had usurped the powers of Congress by regulating commerce with foreign powers and by incorporating foreign soil and foreign people with the United States, this last being a power which it was doubtful whether Congress possessed. Supposing, however, that New Orleans became American, how could a treaty be valid which gave preferential treatment to that single port in admitting French and Spanish ships on equal terms with those owned by Americans? The treaty, they asseverated, was therefore unconstitutional and, even worse, impolitic, because we were unfitted and did not desire to incorporate into our delicately-balanced system peoples different in speech, faith, and customs from ourselves. They were, however, only mildly opposed to expansion; they were determined and captious in the interpretation of the Constitution. The party in power were avowedly expansionist; their retort was equally dialectic and vapid. The whole discussion would have been empty except for Pickering's contention that there existed no power to incorporate foreign territory into the

United States, as was stipulated by the treaty. The House had resolved, 90 to 25, to provide the money and had appointed a committee on provisional government. The Senate ratified the treaty, 26 to 5.

What made the debates and action of Congress epochal was the Federalist contention that Thomas Jefferson, as provisional and interim governor, was nothing more or less than an American despot in succession to a Spanish tyrant. Where was the Constitution now; where would it be when in appointing the necessary officials—executive, judicial, and legislative—he would usurp not merely Spanish despotism, but the powers of both the other branches of the Federal Government? The Republicans quibbled, too; to appoint these three classes of officials was not to exercise their powers. But they confirmed in unanswerable logic a distinction thus far only mooted in our political history—that between States and Territories. Already presidential appointees were exercising all three powers in Mississippi and Indiana. This clenched the contentions of the Republicans, and the bill for provisional government passed by an overwhelming vote on October 31. Both parties throughout the struggle had tacitly abandoned the position that Congress possessed merely delegated powers and nothing further except the ability to carry them into effect. Both therefore admitted the possible interpretation of the Constitution under stress of necessity, and the Federalists in their quibbling contentions lost hold everywhere except in New England. That section saw its influence eclipsed by the preponderance of southern and western power and ere long was ripe for secession.

Volumes have been written and more will be on the romance of the Louisiana purchase. Josiah Quincy threatened the dismemberment of the Union when the present State of Louisiana was admitted in 1812; but for Jefferson's wisdom in exploration it might have remained a wilderness long after settlement began; Great Britain coveted it in 1815 when Jackson saved it; Aaron Burr probably coveted an empire within it; Napoleon III had dreams of its return to the new France he was to found in Mexico. Excluding the Floridas, which Spain would not concede as a part of it, and the Oregon country, the territory thus acquired was greater than that of Great Britain, Germany, France, Spain, Portugal, and Italy

combined. Its agricultural and mineral resources were, humanly speaking, inexhaustible. No wonder it excited the cupidity as it stirred the imagination of mankind; no wonder if men avid to retain their power were dismayed at the preponderance it was sure to exert eventually in a federal union of States. At the present moment fourteen of our Commonwealths, with a population of about sixteen millions and a taxable wealth of seven billions, occupy its soil. By the time we are fifty years older, at the present rate of settlement, these will contain about a third of the power in the Union as determined by numbers and prosperity. All of them, however, were never more than administrative districts, and by the retroactive influence of this fact State sovereignty has thus been made an empty phrase.

And this leads us to our final contention. If the Louisiana purchase revolutionized our national outlook, our constitutional attitude, and our sectional control, it has quite as radically changed our national texture. From that hour to this we have called to the masses of Europe for help to develop the wilderness, and they have come by millions, until now the men and women of Revolutionary stock probably number less than fifteen millions in the entire country. These later Americans have, like the migrations of the Norsemen in central and southern Europe, proved so conservative in their Americanism that they outrun their predecessors in loyalty to its essentials. They made the Union as it now is, in a very high sense, and there is no question that in the throes of civil war it was their blood which flowed at least as freely as ours in defense of it. It is they who have kept us from developing on colonial lines and have made us a nation separate and apart. This it is which has prevented the powerful influence of Great Britain from inundating us, while simultaneously two English-speaking peoples have reacted one upon the other in their radical differences to keep aflame the zeal for exploration, beneficent occupation, and general exploitation of the globe in the interests of a high civilization. The localities of the Union have been stimulated into such activities that manufactures and agriculture have run a mighty race; commerce alone lags, and no wonder, for Louisiana gave us a land world of our own, a home market more valuable than both the Indies or the continental mass of the East.

39 W

WERT BOOKBINDING
JAN 1989
Grantville, PA